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DECLASSIFICATION: DATE MAR 11/2000 IPS/CR/IR by REQUIRES CONCURRENCE ! CIAHAS NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT 2/7/00,624 Timber. NO OF TOTION LUTTERIAL SECURITY COUN Luns 3-20-2000 MINOPARDUM FOR: Chief, WII/4 Subject Policy Decisions Required for Conduct of Strike Operations Against Coverment of Cuba

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1. Purpose:

The purpose of this assorandum is to outline the current status of our propurations for the confuct of amphibious/airborne and tactical air operations against the Government of Cuba and to set forth certain requirements for policy decisions which must be reached and implemented if these operations are to be carried out.

2. Concept:

As a basic for the policy requirements to be presented below, it would appear appropriate to review briefly the essent of the strike operations contemplated and cutline the objectives which these operations are designed to accomplish.

The concept civineges the estaure of a small lodgment on Cuben soil by an ell-Cuben emphibious/airborne force of shout 750 her. The lendings in Cuba will be preceded by a tactical cir proparation, beginning at down of D-1 Day. The primary purpose of the air proparation will be to destroy or neutralise all Cuben military aircraft and pavel vessels constituting a threat to the invasion force. Then this tack is accomplished, catacha will then be directed against other military targets, including catillary parks, tank parks, military vehicles, cupply damps, etc. Close air support will be provided to the invasion force of Close air support will be provided to the invasion force of Close air support will be provided to the invasion force of Close air supports till be provided to the invasion force of Close air supports till be provided to the invasion force of Close air supports till be provided to the invasion force of Close air supports during this time vill be opposing military formations in the field. Particular efforts will be true to intended to opposing troop may require against the lodgment.

The initial mission of the impraior force will be to seize and defend a small area, which weler ideal equilities will include an airfield and access to the sea for legistle support. Plans must provide, however, for the eventuality that the force will be a from into a tight defensive formation which will proclude supply by so ar control of an implet. Under such elementation supply would have to be middle actively by it drop. The printry enjective of the force will be to purious and maintain its integrity on Sight boil. There will be no early attempt to trush out of the ledgement for further

officialite operations unless and until there is a general uprising against the Custro regime or evert military intervention by United States forces has taken place.

Et is expected that these operations will procipitate a general uprising throughout Cabe and cause the revolt of large segments of the Cabon Army and iditio. The lodgmant, it is hoped, will serve as a radiating point for the thousands who are ready for evert resistance to Castro but who hasitate to act with they can feel come assurance of success. A general revolt in Suba, if one is successfully tri moved by our operations, may serve to topple the Castro regime within a period of weeks.

If insters do not eventuate no predicted above, the longment entablished by our force can be used as the site for establishment of a provisional government which can be recognized by the United States, and hopefully by other American etabes, and given overt military assistance. The way will then be proved for United States military intervention also int pacification of Cuba, and this will result in the prompt overthrow of the Castro Government.

While this paper is directed to the subject of strike operations, at should not be promised that other parentlitary projects will be suspended or shouldened. These are being intensified and accolorated. They include the capily by air and not of parentlin elements in Cara, the conduct of substance operations, the introduction of specially trained parentlitary term, and the expension of our expent notworks throughout the icknet.

3. Otoler of Perces:

2. Alp. The Project tactical air force includes ton B-20 aircraft correctly based in Suctembe and at Egila Air Force fact. However, those one only five Coban B-20 pilots available no this time who are correlated to be of high technical experience. The whitiaral Coban pilots are available, but their proficiency is constitutable.

It is planted that some C-Sh and four C-MG transports will be explicited for strike eperations. Here again, the number so conditied than even is impulficient. There is one qualified C-S cross on head at this time, and three C-MG cross.

Aviation evaluate for conduct of strike operations is yet to be positioned at the obside base in Dicaregus. Eccessary construction and repoints at this base are now scheduled to commune, and there appears to be no obstacle to placing this facility in a place of realizable in time for operations so planned.

Conclusions:

- (1) The number of qualified Cuben B-26 crows evailable do inclequate for conduct of chalks operations.
- (2) The nuctor of qualified Cuben transport error is ground imaginate for supply operations which will be required in support of the invasion force and other friendly forces which are expected to join or exercte in conjunction with it in many parts of Cube. It is enticipated that multiple sortics will be required on a daily basis.
- b. Haritime. Amphibious craft for the operation, including three LCU's and four LCUP's are now at Vicques, Puerto Rico, where Count area training is progressing satisfactorily. These erest with their cross will soon be ready for operations.

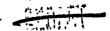
The BANKARA J (LCI), now expose to the United States from Fearto Rico, required deposits which may take up to two wester for completion. Whe mister this, the BIAGAR, is outsitting in Michi, and the crew is being associated. It is expected that both vescels will be fully operational by mid-January at the lawset.

In view of the difficulty and delay encountered in purchasing, outfitting and readying for out the two LCI's, the decision has been reached to purchase no more major vessels, but to charter than instead. The motor phip, RIO ESCOMIDO (converted hit) will be chartered this week and one shifticant stome this, commutat larger, will be chartered early in February. Both ships I stong to a Fernancian Comporation controlled by the Charlies of Cabo, who are as inverse cooperating with this Project. These two ships will present sufficient lift for troops and supplies in the investor operation.

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er Grand. There are approximately 900 of all personnal nor do training to because. Resolve being antioved in the 170 secretaries articles and personal antioned that extreordinary an investe any be regulated if the ranks of the Access Deignle and to be filled to its planned research of 700 by add-Sameny. Openial so its light to the empired of meshage of the Access Brighte ero being brought to liked to easiet in countring of the iron in that of my passions in other countries, notably Maxico and Venesuola.



All recruits should be excilable by mid-January to allow at least four to six weeks of training prior to commitment.

The Assent Brigade has been forced into its basic organization (a quairengular infantry battallon, including four rifle companies, that a version company). Training is proceeding to the entire possible with the limited number of military instructors remiliable. Wels force counct be adequately trained for combat unless additional military trainers are provided:

Conclusions

- (1) It is probable that the Assault Briguic can reach its planned strength of 750 prior to commissue, but it is possible that against of 100 of these can will be recruited too late for adequate training.
- (2) Unless U. S. Army Special Forces training terms as requested are sent promptly to Guatamala, the Assault Drigade cannot be readed for example by late February as planted and desired.
- (3) The Account Brigale should not be consisted to action until it has received at least four and preferably six weeks of training under expervision of the U.S. Army terms. This means that the latter half of February is the carliest setisfactory time for the strike operation.

4. Unjor Policy ferritions Requiring Resolution:

In order that planning and preparation for the stable operation may proceed in an endorsy manner and correct positioning of hundreds of tons of capplies and equipment can be effected, a number of firm decisions econorming rador questions of policy are required. These are disqueed below.

e. The Concept Riself.

Dispusion. The question of whether the incoming articletration of Translant-cleat Kannedy vill concur in the common of the strike operations authored above noeds to be received at the earliest possible time. If these operations are not to be conducted, then preparations for them should ecose forthwith in order to evoid the needless wante of great human effort and namy millions of dollars. Recruitment of editional Cuban personnel should be stopped, for every new recruit who is not amployed in operations as intended presents an editional problem of eventual disposition.

Recommendation. That the Director of Central Intelligence attempt to determine the position of the President-Elect and his Secretary of State-Designate in regard to this question as soon as possible.

b. Thing of the Operation.

If Army Special Forces training terms are made available and dispetched to Guaternile by mid-January, the leasult Brigade can achieve acceptable readiness for combat during the letter half of February, 1961. All other required preparations can be made by that came time. The operation should be launched during this period. Any delay beyond I kurch, 1961, would be insalvisable for the following reasons:

- (1) It is downful that Cuban forces can be maintained at our Gustemalon training base beyond I March 1961. Pressures upon the Government of Gustemala may become unmanageable If Cuban ground troops are not removed by that date.
- (2) Cuber trainers cannot be held in training for much longer. Heny have been in the camp for months under most existers and rentrictive conditions. They are becoming restive call if not consisted to action soon there will probably be a general lowering of morals. Large-scale descritions could occur with attendant possibilities of surfacing the entire program.
- (3) While the support of the Castro Government by the Orden populace is deteriorating rapidly and time is working in our favor in that came, it is vorking to our disadvantage in a military sense. Cuban jet pilots are being trained in Cacchesic which and the appearance of molern rader throughout Cota indicates a strong possibility that Castro may seen have an all-mather jet intercept appeality. His ground forces have received vast quantities of military equip at from the Blac equatries, including modium and heavy taxas, field artillary, heavy northwa and anti-alremant artillary. Bloc technicions are training his forces in the use of this formulable equipment. Unlambtedly, within the near future Castro's head core of logal axied forces will achieve technical proficioncy in the use of systleble modern weapons.
- (b) Curiro is making rapid progress in establishing a Convainst-otyle police state which will be difficult to unsent by any means short of evert intervention by U.S. military forces.

Recommended. That the strike operation to conducted in the latter half of February, and not later than 1 forth 1961.

c. Air Striker.

The question has been raised in some quarters as to the time the meditione/eleverne operation could not be mounted victions toobless his preparation or support or with minimal air pullerit. It is exicuate in aphibicas operations that control for the out wer in the objective area is decolutely required. The Colon his Force and shoul rescale espable of opposing our handles that be inoched out or nontrolled before our emblishme chirping arrive its finel run into the teach. If this is not done, no will be courting discator. Also, since our immedian force is very small in experison to forces which may be thrown equipment it, no tast components for numerical inferiority by efforting tarbical our support not only during the loading but thereafter as long as the force remains in eachet. It is coimibied that opposing military torgets such as extillory parks, tonk parks, supply dungs, unlitery corresponds troops in the field be brought under effective and continuing air ations. Payelological considerations also make such attacks especial. The openimies capacte of air operations will go for toward producing the upplains in Orde that we seek.

Resemendations.

- (1) That the sir preparation commone not leter than dam of D minus 1 Day.
- (2) That may move to curtail the memor of aircraft to be exployed from these evallable be firely resisted.
- (3) That the operation be ebendoned if policy does not provide for use of edaguate testical air support.

d. Use of Aserican Contract Pilots.

The paragraph above cutlines the requirement for pasadles and effective air strikes, while an earlier paragraph points up the chartage of qualified Caben pilots. It is very questionable that the limited number of Caben B-26 pilots evailable to us can produce the decired results unless suggested by highly childred American contract pilots to serve as cection and filly childred in attacks against the norm critical targets. The Color pilots are in attacks against the norm critical targets. The Color pilots are incorporation and gameny. There is reason also to the past they may hark the activation to take the steam and successful that they may hark the activation to take the steam and senses required equinst targets in their cap country. It is exactly and that the success of the operation will be joquadized unless a few American contract B-26 pilots are employed.

Vith rejud to logistical air operations, the shortage of Cohm cross has already been mentioned. There is no prospect of producing sufficient Cohm C-54 cross to mention acres C-54 aircraft to be used in the operation. Our experience to date with the Cohm terreport error has left much to be desired. It is ecceluled that the only entisfectory colution to the problem of air legistical support of the strike force and other forces joining it will be to employ a member of fearican continuet cross.

Recordantica.

That policy approval be obtained for use of fearless extract eross for the thethesh and transport aircraft in companiation of the inadequate maker of Chem cross available.

e. Use of Prorto Odkomus, Micorema.

The sirfield of Fuerto Cabeses is essential for conduct of the strike equation valers a test is note evaluable in the United States. Our air lease in Casterals is 800 miles from central Cabe -- too distant for 8-26 operations and for air capply operations of the angultule required, using the C-46 and C-54 charact. Fuerto Cabesas is only 500 miles from central Cabe -- acceptable, although too distant to be completely desirable, for 8-26 and transport equations.

Prerio Caba has will also serve as the staging area for Lording bissult troups into tymesports such more extlafactorily when Prorto Durgias, Cantranta which is emposed to heatile cheerial tion and lowes are wity. It is glammed that troops will be flown in important and the first of the first of Cabases, placed in covered the dis, looked over the deals of might into caphibicus shipping, which will then impoliately retire to see.

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The strike operation ement be confucted releas the facto Chang our facility is available for our ore, or whose on air base in the United States is make available.

Became intica. That fire policy be obtained for use of Puerto Caletta and in the obtain base and staging area.

f. Use of U. S. Air Base for Logistical Flights.

An air base in southern Florida would be roughly tidee as close to central Cuba as Puerto Cabezas. This mans that the logistical espability of our limited number of transport aircraft would be almost doubled it operated from Florida milier than Puerto Cabezas. Logistical support of the strike force in the target would be much more certain and efficient 1.7 Flowa from Florida.

There is also a possibility that once the strike operations common, conditions would devolop which would force us cut of the Micaragum air base. Without some flexibility of conditional expeditivy including on additional logistical support air base with pre-positioned supplies in the United States, we could conceivably be confronted with a situation wherein the Assoult Erigade would be lost entirely without logistical air cuplent. Supply by sea cannot be relied upon, for the Brigade my be driven by superior forces from the beach area. Such a situation could load to complete defeat of the Brigade and include of the mission.

It come obvious that the only real estate which the United States can, without question, continue to employ once the operation commences is its own soil. Therefore, an air base for logistical support should be provided in the United States. This will offer the possibility of continued, flexible operations, if one or both of our bases in Guaterals and/or Micaragus are lost to our use.

Recommendation.

That policy be entablished to permit use of an air base in southern Florida (preferably Ope Locks which is now wallable to us and loss change facilities for supplies) for equiptical support filights to Cobs.

J. Howkins Colonal, V. S. Marine Corps Chief, VM/M/PM

Distribution: Culginal & 2 - Addressee



TRANSCRIPTION FOLLOWS

SECRET

4 January 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Chief, WH/4

SUBJECT:

Policy Decisions Required for Conduct of Strike

Operations Against Government of Cuba

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this memorandum is to outline the current status of our preparations for the conduct of amphibious/airborne and tactical air operations against the Government of Cuba and to set forth certain requirements for policy decisions which must be reached and implemented if these operations are to be carried out.

2. Concept:

As a basis for the policy requirements to be presented below, it would appear appropriate to review briefly the concept of the strike operations contemplated and outline the objectives which these operations are designed to accomplish.

The concept envisages the seizure of a small lodgement on Cuban soil by an all-Cuban amphibious/airborne force of about 750 men. The landings in Cuba will be preceded by a tactical air preparation, beginning at dawn of D-1 Day. The primary purpose for the air preparation will be to destroy or neutralize all Cuban military aircraft and naval vessels constituting a threat to the invasion force. When this task is accomplished, attacks will then be directed against other military targets, including artillery parks, tank parks, military vehicles, supply dumps, etc. Close air support will be provided to the invasion force on D-Day and thereafter as long as the force is engaged in combat. The primary targets during this time will be opposing military formations in the field. Particular efforts will be made to interdict opposing troop movements against the lodgement.

The initial mission of the invasion force will be to seize and defend a small area, which under ideal conditions will include an airfield and access to the sea for logistic support. Plans must provide, however, for the eventuality that the force will be driven into a tight defensive formation which will preclude supply by sea or control of an airfield. Under such circumstances supply would have to be provided entirely be air drop. The primary objective of the force will be to survive and maintain its integrity on Cuban soil. There will be no early attempt to break out of the lodgement for further offensive operations unless and until there is a general uprising against the Castro regime or overt military intervention by United States forces has taken place.

It is expected that these operations will precipitate a general uprising throughout Cuba and cause the revolt of large segments of the Cuban Army and Militia. The lodgement, it is hoped, will serve as a rallying point for the thousands who are ready for overt resistance to Castro but who hesitate to act until they can feel some assurance of success. A general revolt in Cuba, if one is successfully triggered by our operations, may serve to topple the Castro regime within a period of weeks.

If matters do not eventuate as predicted above, the lodgement established by our force can be used as the site for establishment of a provisional government which can be recognized by the United States, and hopefully by other American states, and given overt military assistance. The way will then be paved for United States military intervention aimed at pacification of Cuba, and this will result in the prompt overthrow of the Castro Government.

While this paper is directed to the subject of strike operations, it should not be presumed that other paramilitary programs will be suspended or abandoned. These are being intensified and accelerated. They include the supply by air and use of guerrilla elements in Cuba, the conduct of sabotage operations, the introduction of specially trained paramilitary teams, and the expansion of our agent networks throughout the island.

3. Status of Forces:

a. <u>Air.</u> The Project tactical air force includes ten B-26 aircraft currently based in Guatemala and at Eglin Air Force Base. Moreover, there are only five Cuban B-26 pilots available at this time who are considered to be of high technical competence. Six additional Cuban pilots are available, but their proficiency is questionable.

It is planned that seven C-54 and four C-46 transports will be available for strike operations. Here again, the number of qualified Cuban crews is insufficient. There is one qualified C-54 crew on hand at this time, and three C-46 crews.

Aviation ordinance for conduct of strike operations is yet to be positioned at the strike base in Nicaragua. Necessary construction and repairs at this base are now scheduled to commence, and there appears to be no obstacle to placing this facility in a state of readiness in time for operations as planned.

Conclusions:

- (1) The number of qualified Cuban B-26 crews available is inadequate for conduct of strike operations.
- (2) The number of qualified Cuban transport crews is grossly inadequate for supply operations which will be required in support of the invasion

force and other friendly forces which are expected to join or operate in conjunction with it in many parts of Cuba. It is anticipated that multiple sorties will be required on a daily basis.

b. <u>Maritime</u>. Amphibious craft for the operation, including three LCU's and four LCVP's are now at Vieques, Puerto Rico, where Cuban crew training is progressing satisfactorily. These craft with their crews will soon be ready for operations.

The BARBARA J (LCI), now enroute [sic] to the United States from Puerto Rico, requires repairs which may take up to two weeks for completion. Its sister ship, the BLAGAR, is outfitting in Miami, and its crew is being assembled. It is expected that both vessels will be fully operational by mid-January at the latest.

In view of the difficulty and delay encountered in purchasing, outfitting and readying for sea the two LCI's, the decision has been reached to purchase no more major vessels, but to charter them instead. The motor ship, RIO ESCONDIDO (converted [illegible]) will be chartered this week and one additional steam ship, somewhat longer, will be chartered early in February. Both ships belong to a Panamanian Corporation controlled by the GARCIA family of Cuba, who are actively cooperating with this Project. These two ships will provide sufficient lift for troops and supplies in the invasion operation.

Conclusion:

Maritime crews required will be available in ample time for strike operations in late February.

c. <u>Ground</u>. There are approximately 500 Cuban personnel now in training in Guatemala. Results being achieved in the FRD recruiting drive now underway in Miami indicate that extraordinary measures may be required if the ranks of the Assault Brigade are to be filled to the planned strength of 750 by mid-January. Special recruiting teams comprised of members of the Assault Brigade are being brought to Miami to assist in recruiting efforts in that city and possibly in other countries, notably Mexico and Venezuela. All recruits should be available by mid-January to allow at least four to six weeks of training prior to commitment.

The Assault Brigade has been formed into its basic organization (a quadrangular infantry battalion, including four rifle companies, and a weapons company). Training is proceeding to the extent possible with the limited number of military instructors available. This force cannot be adequately trained for combat unless additional military trainers are provided.

Conclusions:

- (1) It is probable that the Assault Brigade can reach its planned strength of 750 prior to commitment, but it is possible that upwards of 100 of these men will be recruited too late for adequate training.
- (2) Unless U.S. Army Special Forces training teams as requested are sent promptly to Guatemala, the Assault Brigade cannot be readied for combat by late February as planned and desired.
- (3) The Assault Brigade should not be committed to action until it has received at least four and preferably six weeks of training under supervision of the U.S. Army teams. This means that the latter half of February is the earliest satisfactory time for the strike operation.

4. Major Policy Questions Requiring Resolution:

In order that planning and preparation for the strike operation may proceed in an orderly manner and correct positioning of hundreds of tons of supplies and equipment can be effected, a number of final decisions concerning major questions of policy are required. These are discussed below.

a. The Concept Itself.

<u>Discussion</u>: The question of whether the incoming administration of President-elect Kennedy will concur in the conduct of the strike operations outlined above needs to be resolved at the earliest possible time. If these operations are not to be conducted, then preparations for them should cease forthwith in order to avoid the needless waste of great human effort and many millions of dollars. Recruitment of additional Cuban personnel should be stopped, for every new recruit who is not employed in operations as intended presents an additional problem of eventual disposition.

Recommendation. That the Director of Central Intelligence attempt to determine the position of the President-Elect and his Secretary of State-Designate in regard to this question as soon as possible.

b. Timing of the Operation.

If Army Special Forces training teams are made available and dispatched to Guatemala by mid-January, the Assault Brigade can achieve acceptable readiness for combat during the latter half of February, 1961. All other required preparations can be made by that same time. The operation should be launched during this period. Any delay beyond 1 March, 1961, would be inadvisable for the following reasons:

(1) It is doubtful that Cuban forces can be maintained at our

Guatemalan training base beyond 1 March 1961. Pressures upon the Government of Guatemala may become unmanageable if Cuban ground troops are not removed by that date.

- (2) Cuban trainees cannot be held in training for much longer. Many have been in the camp for months under most austere and restrictive conditions. They are becoming restive and if not committed to action soon there will probably be a general lowering of morale. Large-scale desertions could occur with attendant possibilities of surfacing the entire program.
- (3) While the support of the Castro Government by the Cuban populace is deteriorating rapidly and time is working in our favor in that sense, it is working to our disadvantage in a military sense. Cuban jet pilots are being trained in Czechoslovakia and the appearance of modern radar throughout Cuba indicates a strong possibility that Castro may soon have an all-weather jet intercept capability. His ground forces have received vast quantities of military equipment from the Bloc countries, including medium and heavy tanks, field artillery, heavy mortars and anti-aircraft artillery. Bloc technicians are training his forces in the use of this formidable equipment. Undoubtedly, within the near future Castro's hard core of loyal armed forces will achieve technical proficiency in the use of available modern weapons.
- (4) Castro is making rapid progress in establishing a Communiststyle police state which will be difficult to unseat by any means short of overt intervention by U.S. military forces

<u>Recommendation</u>. That the strike operation be conducted in the latter half of February, and not later than 1 March 1961.

c. Air Strikes.

The question has been raised in some quarters as to whether the amphibious/airborne operation could not be mounted without tactical air preparation or support or with minimal air support. It is axiomatic in amphibious operations that control of air and sea in the objective area is absolutely required. The Cuban Air Force and naval vessels capable of opposing our landing must be knocked out or neutralized before our amphibious shipping makes its final run into the beach. If this is not done, we will be courting disaster. Also, since our invasion force is very small in comparison to forces which may be thrown against it, we must compensate for numerical inferiority by effective tactical air support not only during the landing but thereafter as long as the force remains in combat. It is critical that opposing military targets such as artillery parks, tank parks, supply dumps, military convoys and troops in the field be brought under effective and continuing air attack. Psychological considerations also make such attacks essential. The spectacular impacts of air operations will go far toward producing the uprising in Cuba that we seek.

Recommendations.

- (1) That the air preparation commence not later than dawn of D minus 1 Day.
- (2) That any move to curtail the number of aircraft to be deployed from those available be firmly resisted.
- (3) That the operation be abandoned if policy does not provide for use of adequate tactical air support.

d. Use of American Contract Pilots.

The paragraph above outlines the requirement for precise and effective air strikes, while an earlier paragraph points up the shortage of qualified Cuban pilots. It is very questionable that the limited number of Cuban B-26 pilots available to us can produce the desired results unless augmented by highly skillful American contract pilots to serve as section and flight leaders in attacks against the more critical targets. The Cuban pilots are inexperienced in war and of limited technical competence in navigation and gunnery. There is reason also to support that they may lack the motivation to take the stern measures required against targets in their own country. It is considered that the success of the operation will be jeopardized unless a few American contract B-26 pilots are employed.

With regard to logistical air operations, the shortage of Cuban crews has already been mentioned. There is no prospect of producing sufficient Cuban C-54 crews to run the seven C-54 aircraft to be used in the operation. Our experience to date with the Cuban transport crews has left much to be desired. It is concluded that the only satisfactory solution to the problem of air logistical support of the strike force and other forces joining it will be to employ a number of American contract crews.

Recommendation.

That policy approval be obtained for use of American contract crews for tactical and transport aircraft in augmentation of the inadequate member of Cuban crews available.

e. Use of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

The airfield at Puerto Cabezas is essential for conduct of the strike operation unless a base is made available in the United States. Our air lease in Guatemala is 800 miles from central Cuba—too distant for B-26 operations and for air supply operations of the magnitude required, using the C-46 and C-54 aircraft. Puerto Cabezas is only 500 miles from central Cuba—

acceptable, although too distant to be completely desirable, for B-26 and transport operations.

Puerto Cabezas will also serve as the staging area for landing assault troops into transports much more satisfactorily than Puerto Barrios, Guatemala which is exposed to hostile observation and lacks security. It is planned that troops will be flown in [illegible] Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, placed in covered trucks, loaded over the train at night into amphibious shipping, which will then immediately retire to sea.

Conclusion:

The strike operation cannot be conducted unless the Puerto Cabezas air facility is available for our use, or unless an air base in the United States is made available.

Recommendation. That firm policy be obtained for use of Puerto Cabezas as an air strike base and staging area.

f. Use of U.S. Air Base for Logistical Flights.

An air base in southern Florida would be roughly twice as close to central Cuba as Puerto Cabezas. This means that the logistical capability of our limited number of transport aircraft would be almost doubled if operated from Florida rather than Puerto Cabezas. Logistical support of the strike force in the target would be much more certain and efficient if flown from Florida.

There is also a possibility that once the strike operations commence, conditions would develop which would force us out of the Nicaraguan air base. Without some flexibility of operational capability including an additional logistical support air base with pre-positioned supplies in the United States, we could conceivably be confronted with a situation wherein the Assault Brigade would be left entirely without logistical air support. Supply by sea cannot be relied upon, for the Brigade may be driven by superior forces from the beach area. Such a situation could lead to complete defeat of the Brigade and failure of the mission.

It seems obvious that the only real estate which the United States can, without question, continue to employ once the operation commences is its own soil. Therefore, an air base for logistical support should be provided in the United States. This will offer the possibility of continued, flexible operations, if one or both of our bases in Guatemala and/or Nicaragua are lost to our use.

Recommendation.

That policy be established to permit use of an air base in

southern Florida (preferably Opa Locka which is now available to us and has storage facilities for supplies) for logistical support flights to Cuba.

J. Hawkins Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps Chief, WH/4/PM

Distribution:

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